

Dragonshards

Church of the Silver Flame, Part 2

By Keith Baker



Ministers and Priests

The Church of the Silver Flame is highly structured. Someone who seeks to enter the order of friars or ministers first serves as an apprentice within his local community, learning the basic teachings of the Flame. When he receives the blessing of the local minister, he can enter one of the seminaries of the Flame.

Most initiates progress as experts, learning mundane skills that will help them serve their communities. Knowledge (religion), Heal, and Diplomacy are vital skills, and Knowledge (the planes) and Sense Motive are encouraged. In addition, most initiates have ranks in Craft or Profession. Various challenges test an initiate's potential to channel divine magic; those who possess this talent are called to the Great Seminary of Flamekeep, where the wisest adepts of the church teach them. The cardinals occasionally visit the Great Seminary, and on rare occasions the Keeper herself will speak to the young adepts. A character's backstory could incorporate this, giving a PC a pre-existing connection with a high-ranking patron in the church. But is the cardinal in question faithful to the Flame, or is she a corrupt schemer?

At the end of this training, a minister usually possesses two NPC levels (expert, adept, or one of each) or one level of cleric.

Paladins and Templars

The templars learn their trade in one of the fortress monasteries scattered across Khorvaire. While monasteries exist throughout Thrane, Breland, and Aundair, the three largest fortresses are located in Thrane: the massive monastery of Kloijnir, which watches over Flamekeep; Tira's Watch, on the southeastern border of Thrane and Breland; and Morningcrest to the west. Templars live an austere life, and they dedicate themselves to combat training and religious studies. The majority of templars become warriors, while the most gifted become fighters or monks. A cleric typically travels to a fortress monastery after completing spiritual training in Flamekeep, and here he learns the use of weapons and armor. These monasteries also serve as garrisons, and most templars remain at the monastery even after completing their training. Occasionally a templar accompanies a friar or serves as a pilgrim; this calling is a matter between the templar and the abbot.

Paladins are a special case. You cannot train to be a paladin: it is a spiritual calling. Many paladins learn basic skills outside of the Church, since the Voice of the Flame guides them. Ministers and friars who discover a potential paladin send her to a monastery for full training, though some paladins have risen to significant levels before officially joining the church. A paladin must undergo tests at Flamekeep before she can act as an official representative of the Church. Some then take up residence at the templar monasteries, but many serve as pilgrims or serve in secular organizations, such as the Knights of Thrane or the King's Citadel; their calling draws them out to the world, and they find monastic life stifling.

Eberron is a place where alignments are blurred, but the paladin is held to a higher standard. A paladin embodies good, and the Flame itself calls her to serve as a champion of the light. A paladin's powers are the

result of her faith, her purity, and her destiny. If a player wants to be a corrupt warrior with divine powers or a holy warrior who doubts her cause, she shouldn't be a paladin -- she should play a fighter/cleric, or something similar. With that said, the moral ambiguity of Eberron makes life challenging for the paladin who expects everything to be black and white. In a crowd of ten commoners, odds are good that three will be evil. But that doesn't mean they are monsters or even killers -- each is just a greedy, selfish person who willingly watches others suffer. The sword is no answer here; the paladin is charged to protect these people. Oratory, virtue, and inspiration are the weapons of the paladin -- though intimidation may have its place. A paladin who meets this challenge and lives up to the ideals of the Flame should be treated with respect by the faithful; a paladin in good standing should find shelter and support among any community of the Flame.

Friars and Pilgrims

Ministers and templars are assigned to specific regions. Friars and pilgrims take the light of the Flame into dark places. A friar goes through the same training as a minister, but instead of settling in a single community, he is charged with the task of missionary work. A friar travels across Khorvaire preaching the virtues of the Silver Flame and attempting to win converts to the church. Friars also serve as the eyes of the Church; a friar will search every new village for signs of possession, cult activity, or other foulness, and then he can report his findings back to the nearest Church official. The majority of friars are experts; a few remarkable individuals possess adept levels.

The role of the pilgrim is less strictly defined. A pilgrim wanders the world. She is not required to perform missionary work, but she is expected to lead by example wherever she goes, to oppose evil in all its forms. This is the lowest rank in the hierarchy of the church, but it still represents a commitment -- a vow to serve and protect. Pilgrims are not as well received as paladins, but the faithful will still support a passing pilgrim in exchange for a sermon or tales of her bold deeds. This is the most likely role for a PC cleric to fill: As a pilgrim, she is free to go on any adventure she sees fit.

Corruption

In Eberron, the alignment of a priest does not have to match that of his deity. As a result, corruption is a major concern in the Church of the Silver Flame. However, corruption can take many forms, and each can have a vastly different impact on a campaign.

The most common form of corruption is when zealous devotion causes a priest to set aside mercy and compassion. Such a priest may be a pillar of his community and an admirable man who has absolute dedication to the Church. But if he must sacrifice the innocent in pursuit of the greater good, he will. He will torture and kill without remorse. He will not glorify these actions, and will not torture needlessly -- but he will not shirk from using dark methods to win the battle against evil.

A second form of corruption is greed. The clerics and adepts of the Silver Flame are not supposed to sell divine spells; these miracles are to be saved for the protection of the faithful. But some clerics use their spells to gain gold or influence. Some just want to live lives of luxury, but others believe that there are many ways to fight evil -- and that political power is a more effective weapon than a paladin's sword. While these priests have an evil alignment, they may still be working in the interests of the greater good -- at least, as they see it.

These two types of priests both have their redeeming features. They do not see themselves as evil and may aid the cause of good. But then there is the third category -- the priest who knowingly embraces the darkness. A second voice whispers in the Silver Flame -- that of the terrible demon that Tira bound in battle. Occasionally a

good priest is led astray by this false flame. However, a few seek out this quiet voice and serve the interests of the Lords of Dust from the heart of the church. Some believe they will gain immortality or fiendish power in exchange for their devotion. Others have been driven mad by the horrors of the Last War and believe that the light has forsaken the world. Either way, these heretics are cunning and dangerous.

Unfortunately, dealing with corruption is a tricky business. The Church does not define evil as "that which can be detected with *detect evil*"; as noted earlier, someone with an evil alignment may serve the greater good. Furthermore, a cleric of a good deity always possesses a good aura, regardless of her personal alignment. Rank within the church hierarchy is another complication: a pilgrim can't kill a cardinal and expect to get away with it because "he was evil." She will need proof of actions that went against church doctrine and harmed the innocent. Thus, a paladin's ability to *detect evil* allows her to judge the character of those around her -- but it's in no way a license to kill.

When dealing with this sort of situation, a DM should bear in mind that a significant difference exists between rank and character level. A cardinal may be a high-level cleric. He could also be a low-level expert. A high-ranking church official may not be able to physically challenge a high-level PC -- but he has the many resources of the church and the Templars behind him, and lower-ranking members of the Church are expected to defer to his judgment or face sanction and excommunication.

Quests

The Silver Flame has a simple goal: Abolish evil. There are hundreds of options: venturing into Droaam to strike against an enclave of monsters; sneaking into Karnath to destroy a temple of the Blood of Vol; battling lurking fiends or possessing demons in the cities of Khorvaire; recovering a cursed object and then traveling to the Demon Wastes to destroy it; and so on.

Prayers

Appeals to the Silver Flame are short and direct; this religion is born of war, and prayers must be called out in the midst of battle. References to light and flame are extremely common. "Light of the Flame, guide my arm."

Temples

Temples of the Silver Flame always are heavily fortified and capable of providing shelter to the innocent. Furnishings are typically austere, but elaborate carvings displaying intertwining flames and heroes of the church often cover the walls. A brazier filled with silver *continual flame* is set before the altar.

Rites

Priests of the Silver Flame perform many services. While some of these are practical -- ranging from marriage to military training (specifically, archery) -- the tasks of the priest also include offering guidance and inspiration to the community. Daily services provide the faithful with the chance to hear the words of the priest and to present their troubles.

Heralds and Allies

Tira Miron is the voice of the Silver Flame, and her spirit responds to *commune*, *augury*, or similar entreaties -- or

so it appears. Tira has never manifested physically since her sacrifice, and in all likelihood she cannot; she is a conduit that allows the Flame to speak to the common races, not an avatar to fight its battles. Its primary allies are the couatl, but over the millennia a number of noble celestials have heard the call of the Flame and chosen to serve its cause. Thus, a cleric's call for aid could be answered by an archon, an angel, or something stranger and more exotic.

Favored Weapon

The favored weapon of the Church of the Silver Flame is the longbow. Many believe that this dates back to the battle against the rakshasas, who are most vulnerable to piercing weapons. Furthermore, a quiver of arrows can include shafts with a wide range of enchantments or arrowhead materials, allowing a templar to operate at peak efficiency against all manner of beasts and fiends. Priests also encourage archery as a form of meditation, and in many communities the faithful can come to train at the local church of the Flame. This can result in an unusually high number of 1st-level warriors or commoners with Martial Weapon Proficiency (longbow) in areas devoted to the Flame.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and Shadows of the Last War, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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